



Price of a barrel of petroleum today:
US\$ 39.03

INSIDE TODAY

U.S. NEWS

TOP NEWS 2008



In this Nov. 4, 2008 file photo, President-elect Barack Obama, left, kisses his wife Michelle Obama after addressing supporters at the election night rally in Chicago.

See INTERNATIONAL NEWS

SPORTS NEWS

FALCON SOARS



In this Oct. 12, 2008 file photo, Atlanta Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan looks to throw against the Chicago Bears during an NFL football game in Atlanta. The Falcons will play the Arizona Cardinals in the first round of the NFL playoffs on Saturday, Jan. 3, 2008 in Arizona.

See Sports Today

New Year's Eve is on December 31, the final day of the Gregorian year, and the day before New Year's Day

New Year's Eve is a separate observance from the observance of New Year's Day.

In modern Western practice, New Year's Eve is celebrated with parties and social gatherings spanning the transition of the year at midnight.

Many cultures use fireworks and other forms of noise making in part of the celebration.

Different countries celebrate New Year's Eve in different ways. Below are some examples.

Netherlands

New Year's Eve is called Oud en Nieuw ("Old and New") or simply oudejaarsavond ("old year's evening", logical since it's still part of the old year), and is usually celebrated as a cosy evening with family or friends.

Traditional snack foods are



oliebollen (oil dumplings) and appelbeignets (apple slice fritters). On television, the main feature is the oudejaarsconférence, a performance by one of the major Dutch cabaretiers

(comparable to stand-up comedy, but more serious; generally including a satirical review of the year's politics). In Reformed Protestant families, Psalm 90 is read, although this tradition is now fading away.

At midnight, Glühwein (bisschopswijn) or Champagne is drunk. Many people fire off their own fireworks, which are on sale from a few days before; towns don't organise a central fireworks display. Public transport shuts down completely (the only scheduled time during the year) between approximately 20:00 and 01:00.

New Zealand

Auckland is 496.3 kilometres (308.4 mi) west of the International Date Line and

thus is the first major city to see the beginning of the new year, however it is Gisborne that is the first "city" in the world to see the first sun rise for the year.

In common with many other places it celebrates this with large street parties and fireworks displays. Elsewhere in New Zealand, local councils usually organise parties and street carnivals and fireworks displays. In recent years however, liquor bans have been imposed on many of the more popular areas due to disorder, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour. During the day of New Year's Eve, in recent years, the Black Caps have played a One Day International cricket game in Queenstown.

Continued on Pages 2 & 3



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CHICKEN CLUBBACON



CHICKEN CLASSIC



CHICKEN HONEYMUSTARD

New Year's Eve is on December 31, the final day of the Gregorian year, and the day before New Year's Day



Continued from Front Page Peru

Peru celebrates a unique tradition on the last day of the year. Elaborate effigies, called Años Viejos (Old Years) are created to represent people and events from the past year.

Often these include political characters or leaders that the creator of the effigy may have disagreed with. The dummies are made of straw, newspaper, and old clothes, with papier-mâché masks. Often they are also stuffed with fire crackers.

At midnight the effigies are lit on fire to symbolize burning away of the past year and welcoming of the new year. The origin of the tradition is unknown, but is similar to that of the British Guy Fawkes Night. It is possible the

tradition began after a yellow fever epidemic left many dead. The corpses were then disposed of by burning. Other rituals are performed for the health, wealth, prosperity and protection of each member. These rituals are the following: Twelve grapes: Each person eats twelve grapes before midnight, making a wish with each grape. Yellow underwear: One of the most popular traditions, yellow underwear are said to attract positive energies for the New Year. Suitcase: Walking around the block with the suitcase will bring the person the journey of their dreams.

Spain

Spanish New Year's Eve (Nochevieja, or Fin de Año) celebrations usually begin with a family dinner, traditionally including shrimp and lamb or turkey. Spanish people believe that wearing red underwear on New Year's Eve brings good luck. The actual countdown is primarily followed from

the clock on top of the Casa de Correos building in Puerta del Sol square in Madrid. It is traditional to eat twelve grapes, one on each chime of the clock. This tradition has its origins in 1909, when grape growers in Alicante thought of it as a way to cut down on the large production surplus they had had that year. Nowadays, the tradition is followed by almost every Spaniard, and the twelve grapes have become synonymous with the New Year. After the clock has finished striking twelve, people greet each other and toast with sparkling wine such as cava or champagne, or alternatively with cider.

After the family dinner and the grapes, many young people attend New Year parties at pubs, discotheques and similar places (these parties are called cotillones de nochevieja, after the Spanish word cotillón, which refers to party supplies like confetti, party blowers, party hats, etc.). Parties usually last until the next morning and

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NEW ARRIVALS

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range from small, personal celebrations at local bars to huge parties with guests numbering the thousands at hotel convention rooms. Early next morning, party attendees usually gather to have the traditional winter breakfast of chocolate con churros (hot chocolate and fried pastry).

United States

In the United States, New Year's Eve is a major social holiday. One of the top destination cities for New Year's Eve from 2003 to 2006 has been New York, according to hotwire.com. [1] Las Vegas is also attracting a large number of New Year's Eve party goers with the famous Las Vegas strip being closed to vehicles and buses.

In the past 100 years the "ball dropping" on top of One Times Square in New York City, broadcast to all of America (and rebroadcast in many other countries), is a major component of the New Year celebration. The 1,070-pound (490 kg), 6-foot (1.8 m) diameter Waterford crystal ball located high above Times Square is lowered, starting at 11:59:00pm and reaching the bottom of its tower 60 seconds later, at the stroke of midnight (12:00:00am). This is repeated for all four time zones in the continental US. It is sometimes referred to as "the big apple" like the city

itself; the custom derives from the time signal that used to be given at noon in harbors.

From 1981 to 1988, New York City dropped an enlarged apple in recognition of its nickname. From 1972 through 2006, Dick Clark hosted televised coverage of the event called Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve, shown on ABC, and now renamed Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve with Ryan Seacrest for the arrival of 2009.

From 1956 to 1976 on CBS, Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians serenaded the United States from the ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on Park Avenue in New York City. The Royal Canadians continued on CBS until 1978, and Happy New Year, America replaced it in 1979, continuing until 1995. The song Auld Lang Syne has become a popular song to sing at midnight on New Year's Eve.

Venezuela

In Venezuela, many of the traditions are very similar to the ones from Spain, with an over-emphasis in traditions who supposedly will bring good luck in the year forthcoming. Those who want to find love in the New Year are supposed to wear yellow underwear on New Year's Eve; those who want money must have a bill of high value



when toast, those who want to travel must go out home while carrying some luggage, and so on.

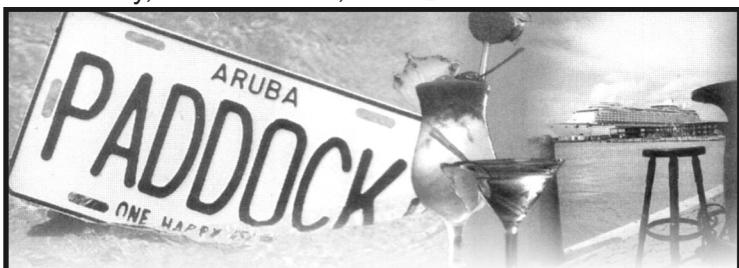
Usually, people listen to radio specials, which give a countdown and announce the New Year according to the legal hour in Venezuela, and, in Caracas, following the twelve

bells from the Cathedral of Caracas. During these special programs is a tradition to broadcast songs about the sadness on the end of the year, being popular favorites "Viejo año" ("Old year") by Gaita group Maracaibo 15 and "Cinco pa' las 12" ("Five minutes before twelve") who

was versioned by several popular singers like Nestor Zavarce, Nancy Ramos and José Luis Rodríguez El Puma. The unofficial hymn for the first minutes of the New Year is "Año Nuevo, Vida Nueva" ("New Year, New Life"), by the band Billo's Caracas Boys□



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THE PADDOCK-WEEK

SUNDAY

11PM TILL 01AM \$2-BAR
**ALL-U-CAN-EAT
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LIVE MUSIC

ENJOY A RELAXED AND CASUAL DINNER
ON OUR TERRACE WITH A BEAUTIFULL
VIEW OF THE SUNSET.

TUESDAY

LIVE MUSIC

2 FOR TUESDAY HAPPY HOUR
FROM 11PM TILL MIDNIGHT
"ASK ONE-GET-TWO"

WEDNESDAY

ALL U CAN EAT RIBS
only \$13 starting at 5pm
Student Night All Drinks **\$1.50**
11pm to 1am

THURSDAY

Live Music

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Weekly something different

FRIDAY

DUTCH HAPPY HOUR from 5 till 7pm
Half Price on 1 BEER and 1 MIX DRINKS!
FREE SNACKS!!

SATURDAY

RED HOT SATURDAY

Every hour 15 min. \$1.00

**We serve Breakfast at 8:30am
EVERY DAY**



www.paddock-aruba.com

Family Felicia celebrates 25 years of sharing and caring



CASIBARI – Family Feliciano celebrated the happy occasion of Fito and Mary's 25th wedding anniversary with friends and family members on hand to congratulate the happy couple and their beautiful children.

The celebration events included a festive mass service at Santa Filomena Church, followed by cocktails at the couple's residence in Piedra Plat, accompanied by steel pan music. Delicious dinner

was served in the nicely set up and decorated backyard with dance music to the

wee hours.

Pictured here snapshots from the elegant silver

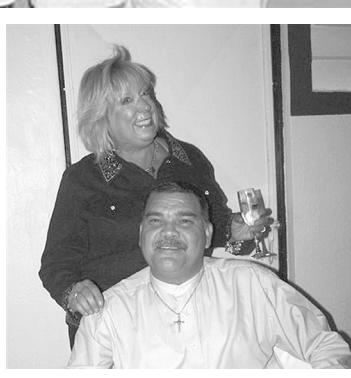


ANNOUNCEMENT

- On December 31st we will close at 5 pm.
- On January 1st we will be closed the entire day.
- On January 2nd we will be ready to serve you at regular hours.



HAVE IT YOUR WAY!



anniversary celebration of Fito & Mary Feliciano, who were showered with love and appreciation that day, may they enjoy many more years together. ☐



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\$19.95 per person plus service charge

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All You Can Eat Dinner Buffet
LagunaRestaurantAruba.com

Dinner Buffet: 5:00 to 10:00 p.m.

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USDA Prime Beef, Fresh Seafood and Spa Cuisine
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Choose from indoor art deco ambiance or open-air terrace dining.

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The Larimar Spa at the Radisson Aruba features nine beautifully appointed treatment rooms, offering a full menu of services including advanced skin care therapies, therapeutic and integrated massages, exfoliating, nourishing and detoxifying body treatments including body polishes and wraps, and a full-service salon...all certain to ensure your return to indulge time after time.

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- Gift Certificates

Open Daily 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
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LarimarSpaAruba.com



MiraSoloAruba.com

Martini Bar

Our outdoor lounge perched atop cascading waterfalls and open to sun, stars and cooling breezes. Liquid pleasures await...premium vodkas, scotches, cognacs, and tequilas - or choose from our Martini Madness menu. The place to start, end or spend the evening!

Open weekdays from 4 p.m. and weekends from 3 p.m.
Live music with "El Prove"



GilligansAruba.com

Casual Beachside Dining

Breakfast: 7:00 to 11:00 a.m.
Lunch: 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. • Dinner: 6:00 to 10:00 p.m.

Sunset Salute Happy Hour with Live Entertainment
Daily 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Bar: 11:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.

J.E. Irausquin Boulevard 81 | Palm Beach | Radisson.com/Aruba | 526.6612 or 526.6613



Please help me find my home back



I am Lost!

We found a brown Chihuahua, maybe 10 years old, blind on one eye, with a young Rottweiler-mix, who has scab under right eye, and a black lead, they were lost in Pos Abao, in the rain, wet, muddy. If these are your pets, please contact Contrera Vets 587 0917 / 593 0404 for Chihuahua and Rottweiler-mix. ☐



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Very reasonable price, exciting menu and NO SERVICE CHARGE

Dinner from 5:30 - 10:00

Monday - Saturday



FRESH CATCH & SEAFOOD

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Call us for Catering Service and Private Party's etc.

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Loyal visitors honored at the Aruba Beach Club



EAGLE BEACH - Recently at Aruba Beach Club, Aruba vacationers were presented with honorary titles created by the Ministry of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guest visiting Aruba for ten and 20 consecutive years. Special friends of Aruba, enjoying ten

or more annual vacations here, are given the Distinguished Guest certificate and those with twenty consecutive years are awarded the Ambassador of goodwill title. The recent honoring were effected by the Aruba Tourism Authority associate Francis Jacobs at the Aruba Beach Club which they

call their home away from home. Mrs. Vernice Mc.Griff and Mrs. Margaret Hoefnagel were honored as ambassador of goodwill for the Island of Aruba.

On picture Ricardo Croes from ATA together with all honorees and also Izaira from ABC



KIDS EAT FREE

A dinner
under the
Caribbean sky!

Las Ramblas

Tapas & Charcoal Grill

The menu features authentic spanish tapas and entrees such as delicious Seafood Paella, USDA Beef Tenderloin & New Zealand Lamb Chops from the charcoal grill.

Open from 6.00pm - 10.30pm. Closed on Sundays and Wednesdays.
Reservation recommended
For reservation call 520-1100 ext. 6154

LACABANA
beach and racquet club

Visit us at our
NEW location on
La Cabana's Boardwalk



Get ready for a close and personal encounter with huge, prehistoric birds! The Aruba Ostrich Farm invites you to meet these unique birds and learn more about their behavior, natural instinct and maybe even stand on its enormous eggs. Our Savanna Lodge Restaurant serves ostrich delicacies, chicken dishes, salads, vegetarian dishes and offers a breathtaking view along Aruba's north shore. Don't forget to pay a visit to our African Art Shop!



Bring this ad for a 20% discount on the tour. Not valid with other promotions.



Only the highest quality will do Nobushi makes sushi like no one else

PASEO HERENCIA - Nobushi brings to Aruba the finest sushi. If you are in a hurry, go somewhere else. At Nobushi, every single piece gets the love and attention it needs from the professional Sushi chefs. The chefs specialize in Aruba Exotic Sushi and Asian Cuisine with unique flavors second to none. The ever so friendly staff will gladly explain the different dishes and specials to you, and help you with unique food & wine pairings. Nobushi Sushi Bar & Asian Cuisine features a variety sashimi, sushi rolls, chicken, fish and meat entrees that will enlighten your senses. Nobushi is located in the Paseo Herencia Mall across the Holiday Inn Resort.



For reservations & more information please call: 586-2211 or ask your concierge.



JOLLY Pirates

SAIL, SNORKEL, SWIM & SWING!
DAILY 9:30-2pm \$55pp
Visit 3 Great sites with BBQ, Open Bar, Gear & Ropeswing!

AFTERNOON SNORKEL
DAILY 3-6pm only \$33pp
Shorter version of am cruise
Open Bar, Gear & Ropeswing!

SUNSET SAIL
Mon & Fri 5-7pm only \$27pp
Open Bar included

Call 586 8107 or 592 7858



\$10 off

Valid only with direct tel. reservation - cannot be combined with other offers. Save \$10 per coupon/per couple for morning cruises. Save \$5 per coupon/per couple for afternoon cruises.

Jolly Pirates welcomes backs more old friends

Repeat Offenders Wanda, Debbie Sparky and Bill

MooMba Beach- Captured aboard the Jolly Pirates was adventure and excitement on the sunny afternoon this foursome returned aboard the Jolly Pirates Teak Schooner. On their Jolly Pirates cruise, it was a newlywed couple and some new found friends along with the crew who got the party started. "Watching young couples dance as the sun sets", Wanda told us, "was a blast"! Wanda, Debbie, Sparky and Bill, Jolly Pirate veterans; join Jolly Pirates sunset sails often. Sitting on her mooring beside the Marriott Resort in her Caribbean Playground the 85ft Jolly Pirate with her billowing white sails is a top choice for Aruba's guests seeking a truly extraordinary sailing trip. When we asked the foursome what it is that keeps the foursome returning to the Jolly Pirates Sunset Sail year after year, they told us, "Once you've tried it you'll keep coming back!" Although they rated their Jolly Pirate experience their favorite, the foursome also enjoyed an ATV outing and golfing at Divi Links.

If you want to enjoy a Jolly Pirate experience for yourself, Jolly Pirates Snorkel and Sunset Sail tickets can be purchased at the Jolly Pirates souvenir shop at MooMba Beach located between the Holiday Inn and Marriott Hotels. Use the Aruba Today coupon to enjoy all the entertainment of a Jolly Pirates cruise at an extra value. The entire crew is ready and waiting to welcome you aboard! Tel: 586-8107



Red Sail Sports Aruba for all sail cruises

Sail with Red Sail Sports Aruba Sunset along Aruba's scenic Coastline

PALM BEACH - Red Sail Sports' catamaran will take you on an unforgettable journey: the Mexican Dinner Sail. Your trip includes a Live Mariachi Band, Mexican Food and an open bar with Tequila, Coronitas and Margaritas. The Mexican Party Sails on Friday from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Aruba's trade winds provide the ideal conditions for sailing aboard Red Sail Sports' top quality, luxurious catamarans.



To make reservations call 586-1603 or go to www.redsail-aruba.com. Be sure to visit one of Red Sail Sports' stores for the latest in swimwear, beach essentials, T-shirts and souvenirs.

Set sail and join Red Sail Sports Half Day Luncheon Snorkel Sail or the romantic Sunset Sail. Red Sail Sports also offers a Dinner Sail which combines a sail along Aruba's scenic coastline and a spectacular view of the sunset with a tantalizing buffet catered by award-winning chefs. If you want to discover Aruba's underwater world, be sure to get in touch with Red Sail Sports. Learn to dive in one day with the Discover Scuba Dive Course, get PADI certified or join us on our daily one and two tank dives. Red Sail Sports is Aruba's lead-in dive and water-sports operator. Activity desks are located at the Hyatt Regency, Marriott Resorts and on Renaissance Island.



Casa Tua makes the best pizza. Period.

Casa Tua draws a crowd of local and not-so-local folks who can't seem to get enough of the pizza and the place. There's almost always a wait here, even if you have reservations, so place yourself at the bar with the smell of brick oven pizzas wafting to other tables, and knowing that at some point, that bliss will be yours.

Al fresco dining is designed with a chicly rustic feel. The atmosphere is cool and relaxed, "Casa Tua" meaning "Your Home" in Italian.

With a Sicilian-style thin crust, dripping with cheese and fresh-made tomato sauce, this pizza comes with a variety of toppings in the meat and veggie categories. Pasta dishes, full Italian meals like Lasagne and veal Osso Buco, fresh salads and rich desserts are also on the menu.

Casa Tua's famous secret



thin crust recipe was handed down by an Italian chef, known locally as "the pizza master", in the French student city of Montpellier in 1969. This recipe has been perfected over the years to such a point where Casa Tua is known on the island these days for the best pizza. Period.

Casa Tua Palm Beach open from 5pm to 11pm.
Casa Tua Downtown open from 11am to 11pm, on Sunday from 5pm to 11pm.
For more information or reservations
Palm Beach: 586 8470
Downtown: 588 5695



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5 TIMES ODDS ON CRAPS
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SPANISH 21
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SPORTS BOOK with LIVE SIMULCAST OF
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NO CHARGE ON WINNINGS
SLOTS OPEN 9 AM
TABLE GAMES 12:30 PM
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Located at the Holiday Inn
Where There's Always A Game

“Aruhiba” Aruba’s homemade cigar



ORANJESTAD - Benjamin Petrochi has started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced cigars called ‘Aruhiba’. These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrochi has always had an interest in the cigar business and has also sold cigars from outside, and now he is growing his own tobacco crop. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba he started his own production and cultivation of



“Aruhiba” cigars in Aruba. The process took 5 years Petrochi’s dedication to the cigars is important for the molding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. The cigar case is specially designed for the cigars with the logo ‘Aruhiba’ and ‘Made in Aruba’. Petrochi considers ‘Aruhiba’ a promotion for Aruba through fine quality cigars. The company sells international cigars as well. Buy a gift box of Aruhiba



Corona with five cigars and get 1 free for \$35.00. Located at the Historic Dutch Windmill from 8am to 8pm. Closed on Sunday.

The only place to get Aruhiba and all major credit cards accepted.

We have homemade and best premium Cuban Cigars. All cigars are legal through costum.

Call 586-7833 or 593-6177. Open for tour operators and we have a large parking space. Come and see Mr. Petrochi rolling the cigars everyday.

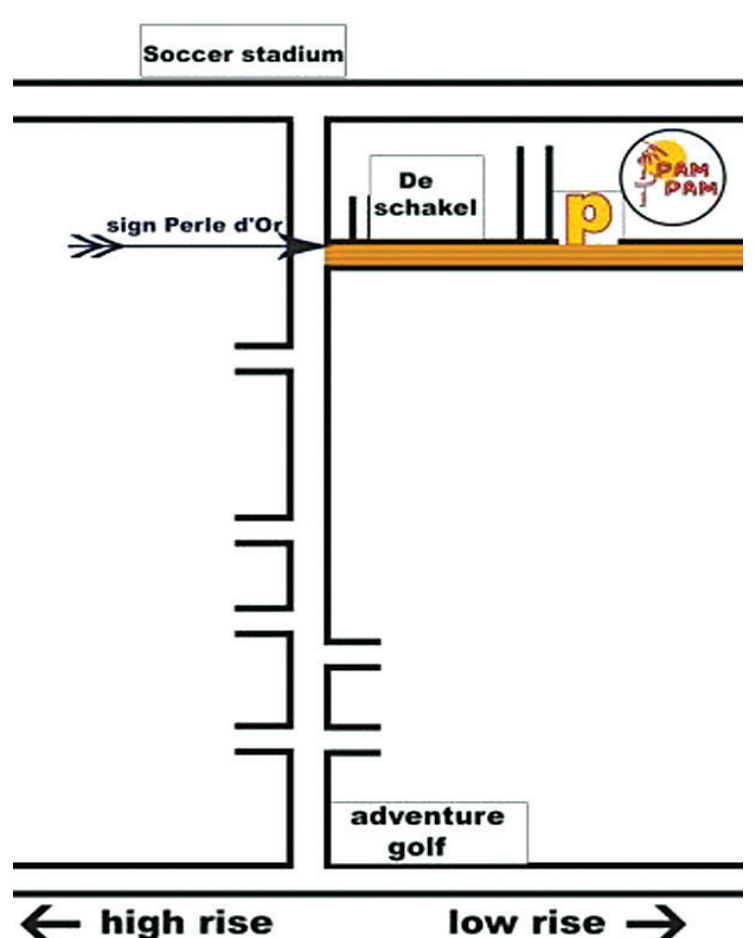



Pam-Pam Restaurant offers a unique gourmet dining experience

Located in the charming topical environs of the Perle D’Or Resort, the Pam-Pam Restaurant offers a peek at Aruba’s cunucu (countryside) while still being conveniently located close to all of Aruba’s prime resorts. First-time patrons will be pleasantly surprised by an appealing a la carte menu that is quite affordably priced,

Pam-Pam’s house specialty is a unique method of preparation, which presently, in Aruba, is found only at their establishment and which they have dubbed their “Gourmet Meal.” A grill and a collection of the freshest of ingredients for the various dishes ordered are assembled tableside, and patrons prepare the food themselves, controlling their preference of seasonings and garnishes, along with degree of doneness, providing a unique and personal taste treat. Gourmet are priced either \$15 or \$20 p.p.

It is suggested that reservations for this singular dining experience be made one day in advance or at least before 1.00 pm Pam-Pam Café and its proprietor, Nico





Basic Gourmet : Chicken
\$ 15.-
Beef
Pork
Hamburger
Groundbeef bacon rolls

Luxe Gourmet : chicken
\$ 20.-
Beef
Pork
Hamburger
Grouperfilet shrimp

Salad
Onion - Paprika
French bread with garlic butter
Variety of sauces

Salad
Patato salad
Onion - Paprika
French bread with garlic butter
Mushrooms
Bacon
Variety of sauces



and Monique, aside from a wonderful and affordable meal provide a friendly atmosphere and a great place to get to know island life and the islanders that frequent visit this popular restaurant. Open seven days a week for

breakfast , lunch & dinner. It is a perfect stop to relax and enjoy ambiance any time of the day true island. When you want to see restaurants menu, visit: www.visitaruba.com. Phone: 5877710 or 5932660

Maxi Mix live at MooMba Beach on January 1st!



MOOMBA - Maxi Mix is a live lounge band with vocals and everyone that has heard them says they are awesome. They will perform tomorrow from 5 till 8 p.m., so it's like

a New Year's happy hour for young and old and for all the people who are still a little in the party mood. Free snacks and happy hour specials from 6 till 7. ☐



Paseo Herencia
"nos orguyo... Aruba's pride"

shopping • dining • night life • movies • liquid fire works

OPENING HOURS:
MON-SAT 9AM - 9PM
SUN 5PM - 9PM



Buccaneer

RESTAURANT

Buccaneer Restaurant is an island tradition for over 25 years that serve creative dishes prepared with a European touch with irresistible secret flavorings which continue to lure guests back, again and again. *Feast on fresh Caribbean catch in one of the cozy booths with a view of an aquarium at each seat, surrounded by tropical splendor and nautical decor. Our second dining room resembles an underwater cave, complete with a 7,500 gallon saltwater aquarium, unseen elsewhere.* Our friendly staff is here to give you the "Welcome Aboard" feeling and the chef-owner will personally take care of you.

Located at Gasparito 11-C, between low and high rise hotels.
Closed on Sundays – serving dinners from 5:30 -10:00pm
Phone: 297-586-6172

WITH THIS AD A FREE GLASS OF HOUSEWINE

Year End Celebration

with popular local groups:

Robert Maduro and his Alma Folklórico

and Grupo Betico

Wednesday, December 31st - 4pm

5pm lighting of the traditional "Pagara"

Shops will be open till 9pm

Parking available in Paseo Parking Garage at Afl. 1.00 per hour
J.E.Yrausquin Blvd. 382-A (Situated across the Holiday Inn) Tel: 586-6533
Walking distance from the High Rise hotels

Lady Luck hits at Excelsior Casino



PALM BEACH – These ladies got very lucky at The Excelsior Casino. The Excelsior Casino

is located in the Holiday Inn Resort, a 600 room facility. The Casino has been in existence

for 30 years; 50% of our guests come from the United States, 30% from South America

and the balance from Europe. The beautiful Excelsior Casino will satisfy your taste for games of chance. One of Aruba's finest casinos, the Excelsior Casino features Las Vegas style gambling of all games of chance as well as a beautiful sports betting area and poker room. The Excelsior Casino is the only casino in Aruba to offer 3-4-5 times odds on Craps and Double Deck Blackjack.

Spanish 21 and Blackjack can be delt out of a shoe at your request. And, most of all, the Excelsior Casino does not hit the soft 17. The Excelsior Casino features the largest Poker Room with limits as low as \$2-\$4 to \$50-\$100 no limit. No need to carry coins to the cashier! The Excelsior Casino's state of the art slot machines are totally Ticket-In, Ticket-Out. □

New Year's Eve Gala Dinner

Seatings from
5:30 pm - 9:30 pm
\$65.00
Per Person
plus 15% service charge!

Children
under 12 years
50% Discount

Including
a bottle of
Champagne
or
House Wine
Per Couple
& Party Favors

e-mail: steakhouse@manchebo.com
giorgios@manchebo.com

Reservations Required:
Tel : 582-3444

Menu:

Mixed Seafood Strudel
With Sautéed salmon, shrimps, scallops, calamari in pastry dough
Served with a tequila tropical fruit relish
or

Spinach Mandarin Salad
Baby spinach dress in an orange dressing with feta cheese and almond
or

Authentic Caesar Salad
Served with our home made Caesar dressing

Crab and Corn Chowder
Homemade Crab & Corn Chowder
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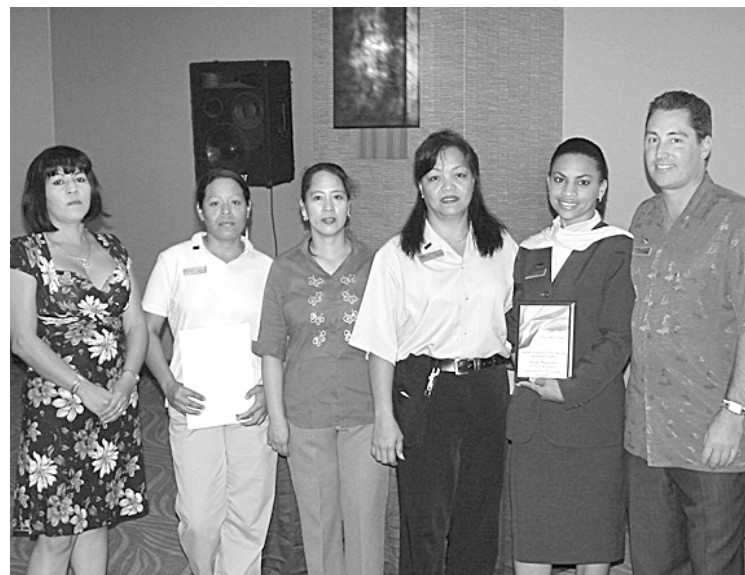
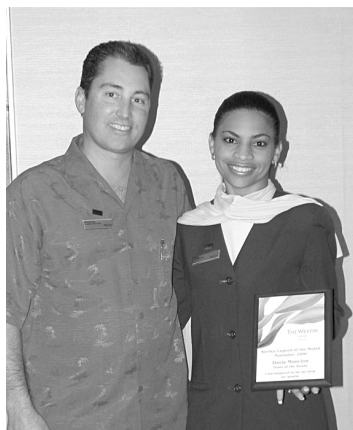
Westin's cream of the crop associates recognized



PALM BEACH-This month, The Westin Aruba Resort held the award's ceremony for the Service Legends of the Month for November in the resort's newly-renovated Palm Beach Ballroom. Associates enjoyed a lavish buffet prepared by Executive Chef Gerard and his culinary team that included pasta, fresh fish, a full salad and deli bar, and dessert. The special luncheon was available throughout the day, so that all associates could enjoy. The associates nominated exemplify the core values recognized by Westin, including providing personal touches and personalized services to 'surprise and delight' every guest,

proactively anticipating guests' needs and making them feel special, and recognizing the special touches offered by Westin to help guests restore the body, expand the mind, and elevate the spirit so they leave not only rested, but also renewed and enriched.

The winners among the



nominees for the month of November were: Davia Monsion from Concierge Services for her professional manner and personal touch with guests, and Julio de la Cruz

attitude and his knack for anticipating the needs of guests and his fellow associates. Pictured here are the nominees and winners with Resort Manager Richard Roy. Congratulations to all! □

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Dinner prices valid December 31st 2008 at Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort and Casino. Reservations are recommended by calling 586-1234 ext. 4574. Or 36 for Ruinas del Mar. Ruinas dinner buffet available from 06.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. Ruinas buffet prices are \$74.00 per person, \$37.00 for children ages 5 to 12 and free for children 4 and under. New Year's Eve Celebration available from 08.00 p.m. to 01.30 a.m.; \$167.00 per person, \$83.50 for children 9 to 17, \$41.75 for children 5 to 8 and free for children 4 and under. Gala Celebration price includes deluxe dinner buffet, party favors, live entertainment, premium open bar, Champagne toast and Aruba's fireworks show. Price does not include 15% service charge or local tax; alcohol beverages. Other restrictions may apply, call for details. Hyatt reserves the right to alter or withdraw this program at any time without notice. HYATT, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, ® names, designs and related marks are trademarks of Hyatt Corporation. © 2008 Hyatt Corporation. All rights reserved.

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Metacorp lights a 5 million shot fire cracker



ORANJESTAD— 28th of December 2008: This has become a yearly tradition that is attended by a mass of

people every year. "This year will be no exception, we are ready to light a 5 million shot firecracker on Wednesday the 31st of December at 1:00pm," so said Zugheila Lindeborg, whom is in charge of Marketing for the Malls. She wanted to remind everybody that as accustomed, they'll be lighting the firecracker

at 1:00pm in front of The Cinemas, and the firecracker extends till in front of Louis Vuitton. Eduardo de Veer, president of Metacorp will light the firecracker, so as to bid farewell to 2008; and prepare for a 2009 full of blessings, prosperity and health for the Aruban community. □





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People from all over the world get together at Bugaloe: they have a few drinks,

a bite to eat, they dance and sway and make new friends. If you have gotten curious here and now, check out the website www.bugaloe.com and you will see at one glance what we are talking about. No words will be needed anymore. Surf to the website for the Bugaloe Event Calendar or leave a note in the Guestbook.

Bugaloe's daily Happy Hours are considered the starting signal for an evening of partying on the island. Locals mingle with visitors and raise their glasses. When you get hungry, order a scrumptious burger, a gourmet pizza, tasty wings or a salad and party on. The night is young, the world is going crazy and you are right in the middle of a super happening. What's not to like? A twice-a-month live breakfast radio show on Fri-

day mornings with a spectacular breakfast buffet will keep you entertained as well.

A hot tip: Bugaloe Beach Bar puts on live bands on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Lotus (YouTube keywords: lotus, bugaloe) and Marisela & Aquarius (YouTube keywords: marisela, confidential, 2008) are playing the stars from the sky. These bands are drawing the crowds, so be there or be square! On those nights the young as well as the young-at-heart are having the time of their lives. Photos of Bugaloe's happy times can be viewed at www.bugaloe.com. Don't forget to put your own movie of you and your friends having a whale of a time at Bugaloe on the web and enjoy being famous, crazy and hilarious. So upload, upload! We are looking forward to seeing you on YouTube or live in action.



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den full of healthy eats on a **lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar**, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but **Texas de Brazil's** version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, homemade soups, and much more.

The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking

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Wednesday, December 31, 2008

Obama's election voted top news story of 2008

By DAVID CRARY

AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) - The epic election that made Barack Obama the first African-American president was the top news story of 2008 - followed closely by the economic meltdown that will test his leadership, according to U.S. editors and news directors voting in The Associated Press' annual poll.

The campaign, with subplots emerging throughout the year, received 100 first-place votes out of 155 ballots cast for the top 10 stories. Two other political sagas - the history-making candidacies of Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sarah Palin - also made the list.

The vast economic crisis, plunging the U.S. into recession and ravaging many business



In this Nov. 4, 2008 file photo, President-elect Barack Obama, left, his wife Michelle Obama, right, and two daughters, Malia, 7, and Sasha, 10, wave at the election night rally in Chicago.

Associated Press

sectors worldwide, was the No. 2 story, receiving 49 first-place votes. The precipitous rise and fall of oil prices was No. 3.

The top story of 2007 was the massacre of 32 people at Virginia Tech University by a mentally disturbed student gunman.

Here are 2008's top 10 stories, as voted by U.S. editors and news directors:

1. U.S. ELECTION: Obama emerged from Election Night as a decisive victor and a symbol for the world of America's democratic promise.

But he reached that point only after a grueling battle with Clinton for the Democratic nomination and then an often-nasty showdown with the McCain/Palin ticket in the run-up to the election.

Continued on Next Page



In this undated publicity photo from ABC, Dick Clark brings in the New Year from New York's Times Square.

Associated Press

Clintons to join NYC mayor for New Year's Eve

By COLLEEN LONG

Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK - Last New Year's Eve they were in Iowa. This year, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and former President Bill Clinton will be in Times Square, helping Mayor Michael Bloomberg lower the glittery New Year's Eve ball.

The Clintons will lead hundreds of thousands of revelers in the final 60-second countdown and push the ceremonial button that lowers the ball, ending their roller-coaster year that saw the former first lady lose to President-elect Barack Obama but be named secretary of state.

Continued on Page B3

Israel mulls truce offer on Day 4 of Gaza assault

By IBRAHIM BARZAK and JASON KEYSER

Associated Press Writers

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)

-Israel is considering a 48-hour halt to its punishing four-day air campaign on Hamas targets in Gaza to see if Palestinian militants will stop their rocket attacks on southern Israel, Israeli officials said Tuesday.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert discussed the proposal - floated by France's foreign minister - and other possible next steps with his foreign and defense ministers, Israeli officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not supposed to make the information public.

Any offer would be coupled with a threat to send in ground troops if the rocket fire continues. In its Tuesday night meeting, Israel's leadership trio stepped up preparations for a ground offensive, conducting a phone survey among Cabinet ministers on a plan to call up



Israeli soldiers are seen at a staging area near Israel's border with the Gaza Strip, in southern Israel, Monday, Dec. 29, 2008.

Associated Press

an additional 2,500 reserve soldiers, if required. Earlier this week, the Cabinet already authorized a callup, in principle, of 6,700 soldiers. And even as there was talk of a truce, Israeli warplanes continued to unload bombs on targets in Gaza. Powerful strikes caused Gaza City's high-rise apartment buildings to sway and showered streets with broken glass and

pulverized concrete. Israel's ground forces on Gaza's border also used artillery for the first time. Hamas kept up its rocket barrages, which have killed four Israelis since the weekend, and sent many more in running for bomb shelters - some of them in cities under threat of attack for the first time, as the rocket range grows.

Continued on Page B6



In this Nov. 4, 2008 file photo, Gov. Sarah Palin, R-Alaska, is seen on stage during an election night rally in Phoenix. The Republican vice presidential candidate and her comedic doppelganger, Tina Fey, took the top two spots in this year's list of most memorable quotes.

Associated Press

TOP NEWS STORY

Continued from Page B1

_ 2 . E C O N O M I C MELTDOWN:

kept coming - collapses of Wall Street giants; huge stock market losses; plummeting home prices and a surge of foreclosures; desperate times for U.S. automakers. It added up to the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, and will cost the federal government well over \$1 trillion in various rescue and stimulus packages.

_3. OIL PRICES: The global economic angst produced hyper-volatile energy markets. The price of crude soared as high as \$150 a barrel in July before crashing to \$33 this month. In the U.S., the average price for a gallon of regular gas peaked at \$4.11, then plunged below \$1.70.

_4. IRAQ: The much-debated "surge" of U.S. troops helped reduce violence after more than five years of war, but Iraq is still buffeted daily by bombings, ambushes, kidnappings and

political uncertainty. A newly ratified U.S.-Iraqi security agreement sets a timetable for U.S. troop withdrawal by 2012.

_5. BEIJING OLYMPICS: China hosted the Olympics for the first time, drawing praise for logistical mastery and condemnation for heavy-handed security measures. The games themselves were rated a success, highlighted by the record-shattering performances of swimmer Michael Phelps and sprinter Usain Bolt.

_6. CHINESE EARTHQUAKE: A huge quake in May killed 70,000 people in Sichuan province and left 5 million homeless. Many thousands of children were among the victims - authorities said about 7,000 classrooms were destroyed in shoddily built schools.

_7. SARAH PALIN: Few Americans outside Alaska

knew much about its governor when Republican John McCain picked her as his running mate. That changed rapidly. To her conservative admirers, she was a feisty, refreshing change from most politicians; to her critics, she was in over her head, and worthy of all the lampooning she endured.

_8. MUMBAI TERRORISM: Ten attackers allegedly sponsored by a Pakistan-based Islamic militant group terrorized India's financial capital in November, killing 164 people in coordinated attacks on hotels, a restaurant, a Jewish center and a train station. India's perennially uneasy relations with Pakistan were badly strained.

_9. HILLARY CLINTON: She did not win, but Clinton came closer than any other woman in U.S. history to becoming a major party's presidential nominee. Her determined primary campaign, waged vigorously even when it seemed a lost cause, inspired millions of women across the country - and helped persuade Obama to choose her as secretary of state.

_10. RUSSIA-GEORGIA WAR: The two nations waged a five-day war in August ignited by a Georgian artillery barrage on the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Russia responded with a drive deep into Georgian territory, causing severe economic damage and

aggravating already troubled Russia-US relations.

Stories that almost made the Top 10 included Cyclone Nargis, which killed more than 84,000 people in Myanmar; Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, which wreaked deadly damage in the Caribbean and on the U.S. Gulf Coast; and the seesaw fate of same-sex marriage in California, where a court ruling approving it was later overturned by a ballot measure.

Several write-in votes were cast for two developments that occurred too late to be included on the AP ballot - the indictment of Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and the efforts of struggling U.S. automakers to get a federal bailout. The alleged financial scam involving money manager Bernard Madoff also was revealed too late to make the ballot.

Several of the editors who voted commented on how two transcendent developments dominated the news in 2008. "As far as I am concerned, there were only two stories this year," wrote Linda Grist Cunningham of the Rockford (Illinois) Register Star. "Global economy collapses (sending every country into financial, political and personal chaos) and Obama elected U.S. president, changing the way that America does business - financial, political and personal." □

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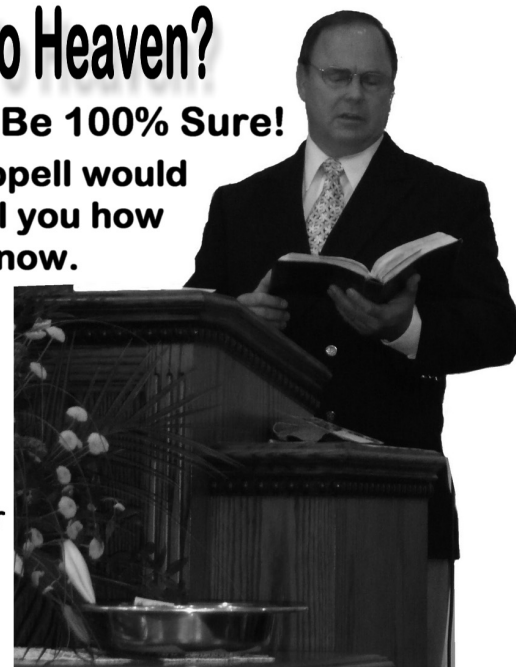


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Time: 6:00 PM

NEW YEARS EVE

Continued from Page B1

Up to a million people are expected Wednesday to wait for the clock to strike midnight, with the forecast calling for snow and temperatures in the low 30s. Portions of the event will be televised live on ABC-TV and other networks.

Five minutes before midnight, 1,000 balloons with the words "Joy," "Hope" and "2009" will drift down from rooftops in the area. More than a ton of confetti will be released at midnight.

The Waterford crystal ball — some 12 feet in diameter and weighing nearly 12,000 pounds — will remain on display atop One Times Square as a tourist attraction after the event.

Security will be tight, with a large police presence and additional counterterrorism units, said Paul Browne, the NYPD's deputy commissioner of public information. Streets

will be closed off to traffic, backpacks won't be allowed into Times Square and alcohol is forbidden.

"I have no concerns other than we always have concerns," Bloomberg said Tuesday. "There's no reason why anybody should stay home, I'm going to be there ... I would urge everybody to be there."

The first-ever Times Square celebration was held in 1904 to commemorate the official opening of the new headquarters of The New York Times.

The city had just renamed the oddly shaped Longacre Square in the newspaper's honor and the newspaper's owner, Adolph Ochs, threw a giant party that culminated in a fireworks display at midnight. In 1907, after the city banned fireworks, Ochs had an illuminated iron and wooden ball lowered from the building's flagpole at midnight. □



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Blagojevich defies Senate, names Obama replacement



Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich announces his choice of former Ill. Attorney General Roland Burris to fill President-elect Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2008, in Chicago.

Associated Press

By DEANNA BELLANDI

Associated Press Writer

CHICAGO — Defying U.S. Senate leaders and his own state's lawmakers, Gov. Rod Blagojevich on Tuesday appointed former Illinois Attorney General Roland Burris to replace President-elect Barack Obama in the U.S. Senate. Blagojevich, accused of trying to sell Obama's Senate seat to the highest bidder, praised the 71-year-old Burris' integrity and asked that the corruption allegations not "taint this good and honest man."

"The people of Illinois are entitled to have two United

States senators represent them in Washington D.C.," Blagojevich said. "As governor I am required to make this appointment."

Burris, standing at the governor's side, said he's eager to get to work in Washington. He said he has no connection to the charges against Blagojevich, who was arrested on Dec. 9 and accused of trying to profit from appointing Obama's replacement.

Burris was the first African-American elected to major statewide office. He's served as Illinois' comptroller and ran for governor three times — the last time losing to Blagojevich.

The Democratic governor's announcement as Burris as his pick may be an empty gesture. Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, who must certify the appointment, said Tuesday he will not do so. And U.S. Senate leaders reiterated that they wouldn't accept anyone appointed by Blagojevich, who was arrested Dec. 9 on federal corruption charges.

In a statement Tuesday, Senate Democrats maintained that Blagojevich should not make the appointment because it is unfair to Burris, unfair to the people of Illinois and ultimately won't stand.

"It is truly regrettable that despite requests from all 50 Democratic Senators and public officials throughout Illinois, Gov. Blagojevich would take the imprudent step of appointing someone to the United States Senate who would serve under a shadow and be plagued by questions of impropriety," the statement said.

"Under these circumstances, anyone appointed by Gov. Blagojevich cannot be an effective representative of the people of Illinois and, as we have said, will not be seated by the Democratic Caucus."

One of the accusations brought against Blagojevich is that he schemed to benefit from his power to name Obama's replacement in the Senate. Federal prosecutors said they recorded conversations in which Blagojevich discussed appointing someone Obama favored in exchange for a position in the new president's Cabinet or naming someone favored by a union if he got a high-level union job.

Blagojevich has faced a flood of calls for his resignation, and the Illinois House has begun impeachment proceedings. He maintains his innocence, and has vowed to stay in office. □

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Lawyer: Jena Six teen shot himself out of despair

By KEVIN MCGILL
Associated Press Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - One of the teenagers at the center of the Jena Six civil rights case involving the display of nooses shot himself because he worried his Christmas Eve shoplifting arrest would ruin his dream of playing college football, a lawyer said Tuesday.

Mychal Bell, 18, shot himself Monday night at his grandmother's house in Monroe, in northeastern Louisiana. He remained hospitalized Tuesday, but police said the wound to his upper right chest was not life threatening.

"When it was broadcast that he was charged with shoplifting he just felt that the whole year had been wasted and that he had worked all of that time for nothing," said Louis Scott, who represented Bell in the so-called "Jena Six" case.

Bell's grandmother, Rosie Simmons, and mother, Melissa Bell, told police that "Mychal had made comments over the past two days that, because of the current media attention he had because of the shoplifting arrest, he didn't feel like he could live anymore," Monroe Police Lt. Jeff Harris said, reading from a police report. Bell was one of a group of black teenagers who once faced attempted murder charges in the 2006 beating of white classmate Justin Barker

at Jena High School, in north central Louisiana's Lasalle Parish. The charges for all the defendants were eventually reduced.

But the severity of the original charges brought widespread criticism and eventually led to more than 20,000 people converging in September 2007 on the tiny town of Jena for a major civil rights march.

After being sentenced to 18 months as a ward of the state following his guilty plea to juvenile charges, Bell moved from Jena to Monroe, where he was in foster care. He was released from state supervision on Dec. 4, said Bill Furlow, a spokesman for Reed Walters, the district attorney for LaSalle Parish.

A football star at Jena High until the Barker beating, Bell had hoped to play for Monroe's Carroll High School, where he is on track to graduate in the spring. But the Louisiana High School Athletic Association wouldn't grant him a fifth year of eligibility to play. Bell had spent 10 months in prison awaiting trial after his 2006 arrest in the beating case.

Bell held on to hopes that he might play for the University of Louisiana at Monroe, Scott said. University spokesman Adam Prendergast declined comment. A message was left Tuesday for the school's director of football operations, Peter Martin.

Police said Bell's Christmas

Eve arrest came after he allegedly tried to steal several shirts and a pair of jeans from a department store and fled when a security guard and off-duty police officer tried to detain him. After they found him hiding under a car, Bell "swung his arms wildly" and one of his elbows struck the security guard with a glancing blow, according to a police report. He was freed on \$1,300 bond. Scott said he believed the arrest likely resulted from a misunderstanding.

"I would be very surprised if he was shoplifting," Scott said. "I had seen him working

out every day even though he knew he wasn't going to be able to play high school football."

Monday's shooting was reported at 7:40 p.m. According to the police report, Bell was staying at his grandmother's home and his mother was visiting at the time. Melissa Bell told police she and Simmons heard a gunshot coming from Mychal's room. They found him on his bed, wounded in the chest.

Police recovered a .22-caliber handgun. It was not clear Tuesday who owned the gun.



In this Thursday, Sept. 27, 2007 picture, Mychal Bell, one of the Jena Six, appears at a news conference after leaving LaSalle Parish Courthouse in Jena, La.

Associated Press

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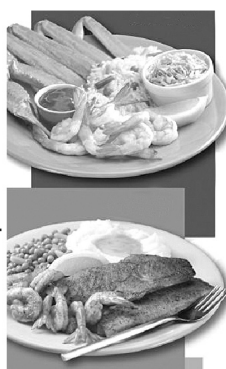
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Wednesday, December 31, 2008

GAZA ASSAULT

Continued from Page B1

A medium-range rocket hit the city of Beersheba for the first time ever, zooming 28 miles deep into Israel and slamming into an empty kindergarten. A second rocket landed in an open area near the desert city, Israel's fifth largest.

A pattern of daytime lulls and nighttime spikes in rocket fire appeared to be emerging as militants found safer launch cover in darkness.

Four days into a campaign that has killed 374 Palestinians and prompted Arab and international condemnation, a diplomatic push to end the fighting gathered pace.

European Union foreign ministers met in Paris Tuesday evening for urgent talks on the crisis, with France and Germany both seeking a cease-fire.

From Washington, U.S. President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza

Rice called leaders in the Middle East to press for a durable solution beyond any immediate truce.

In two phone calls to Defense Minister Ehud Barak on Monday and Tuesday, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner appealed to the Israeli defense minister to consider a truce to allow time for humanitarian relief supplies to enter the beleaguered Gaza Strip, two senior officials in Barak's office said.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was expected to travel to Paris Friday for talks with French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

A Hamas spokesman said any halt to militant rocket and mortar fire would require an end to Israel's crippling blockade of the Gaza Strip. "If they halt the aggression and the blockade, then Hamas will study these suggestions," said Mushir Masri.

Israel's military, meanwhile,



The damaged vessel SS Dignity from the group Free Gaza, arrives in the southern port city of Tyre, Lebanon, Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2008. The boat, carrying international peace activists and medical supplies to the embattled Gaza Strip, arrived back in Tyre, after being turned back and damaged by the Israeli navy, according to organizers of the trip.

Associated Press

pressed on, sending warplanes to strike a Gaza government complex that includes the ministries of interior, foreign affairs and justice. Bombs ripped the tops and sides from buildings that had already been evacuated and left fires blazing in upper floors.

It was the largest government target hit so far and involved the largest number of bombs dropped in a single strike - at least 16 in all.

The airstrikes have sent the people of densely populated Gaza on a zigzagging desperate search for safer ground - hard to find with no way out of the blockaded te

After nightfall, Israel destroyed 40 tunnels under the sealed Gaza-Egypt border in another attempt to cut the vital lifeline that supplies Gaza with both commercial goods and weapons for Hamas and other militant groups. Israel's military said it hit 30 targets altogether on Tuesday, including a Cabinet building, rocket launching sites and places where missiles were being built. Some of the hits on sites with weapons stockpiles triggered secondary explosions. The question still hanging over the Israeli operation is how it can halt rocket fire. Israel has never found a military solution to the barrage of missiles. An anti-missile system called the "Iron Dome" that it is building will take years to complete.

Beyond delivering Hamas a deep blow and protecting border communities, the assault's broader objectives remained cloudy. Israeli President Shimon Peres acknowledged the challenge, saying the operation was unavoidable but more difficult than many people anticipated.

"War against terrorists is harder in some aspects than fighting armies," Peres said.

Hamas also said it would take more to cripple it.

A spokesman for Hamas' military wing, Abu Obeida, said the group remained strong, and he vowed to fight on as long as Israel continues its airstrikes. He noted that even while under heavy airstrikes, militants had fired rockets that reached Israeli towns farther from Gaza than ever. "Rockets will be on your daily agenda," he said in a message to Israelis.

And if there's a ground invasion, he promised worse. "If you enter Gaza, the children will collect your flesh and the remains of your tanks which will be spread out through the streets."

The offensive came shortly after a rocky, six-month truce expired.

Emad Falluji, a former Hamas leader working at a Gaza-based think tank, said he believes Hamas had wanted to renew the truce but felt humiliated by Israel's decision to maintain a tight blockade on Gaza.

"Israel didn't want to give Hamas anything in return for the cease-fire, which was effectively free," he said.

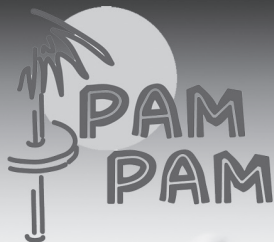
Egypt, which has been blockading Gaza from its southern end, has come under pressure from the rest of the Arab world to reopen its border with the territory because of the Israeli campaign. Egypt has pried open the border to let in some of Gaza's wounded and to allow some humanitarian supplies to enter the territory. But it quickly sealed the border when Gazans tried to push through forcefully.

In a televised speech Tuesday, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak responded to critics, including the leader of the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, who have accused him of collaborating with Israel.

"We tell anybody who seeks political profits on the account of the Palestinian people: The Palestinian blood is not cheap," he said, describing such comments as "exploiting the blood of the Palestinians."

Mubarak said his country would not throw open the border crossing unless Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas - a Hamas rival - regains control of the border post. Mubarak has been rattled by the presence of a neighboring Islamic minstate in Gaza, fearing it would fuel more Islamic dissidence in Egypt. □

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Just a second, 2009-the Earth needs to catch up

By **RAPHAEL G. SATTER**
and **JAMEY KEATEN**

Associated Press Writer

AT THE GREENWICH PRIME MERIDIAN, England (AP) - Is it possible for a clock to be too precise?

The debate has been raging as officials prepare to mark the end of 2008 by tacking a second onto the clock on Wednesday, ever-so-slightly slowing the arrival of the new year.

The "leap second" has been used sporadically at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich since 1972 to account for the minute slowing of the earth's rotation - tweaks that have kept Greenwich Mean Time the internationally agreed time standard.

Some scientists say GMT should be replaced by International Atomic Time - computed outside Paris - because new technologies have allowed atomic time to tick away with down-to-the-nanosecond accuracy.

But opponents say atomic time's very precision poses a problem. A strict measurement, they say, would change our very notion of time forever, as atomic clocks would one day outpace the familiar cycle of sunrise and sunset.

The time warp wouldn't be noticeable for generations, but within a millennium, noon - the hour associated with the sun's highest point in the sky - would occur around 1 o'clock. In tens of thousands of years, the sun would be days behind the human calendar.

That bothers people like Steve Allen, an analyst at the University of California's Lick Observatory.

"I think (our descendants) will curse us less if we choose to keep the clock reading near 12:00 when the sun is highest in the sky," Allen said.

Atomic time advocates argue that leap seconds are onerous because they're unpredictable. Since the exact speed of the earth's rotation can't be plotted out in advance, they're added as needed. Sometimes, like this year, they're added on Dec. 31, sometimes they're inserted at the end of June 30. Those willy-nilly fixes can trip up time-sensitive software, particularly in Asia, where the extra second is added in the middle of the day. Critics say everything

from satellite navigation to power transmission and cellular communication is vulnerable to problems stemming from programs ignoring the extra second or adding it at different times. When the extra second is added, the National Institute of Standards and Technology

in Boulder, Colorado, which provides the time standard for computers and appliances across the U.S., will probably be busy fixing bugs starting at 5 p.m. Mountain Time, predicted Judah Levine, a physicist at the institute's Time and Frequency Division. □



Visitors stand around the Greenwich Meridian Line at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, London, Tuesday Dec. 30, 2008.

Associated Press





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'Valkyrie' non-flop augurs well for Cruise, UA

By JAKE COYLE,
AP Entertainment Writer
NEW YORK — After the reasonably strong box office performance of "Valkyrie" over the weekend, skeptics were robbed of the chance to declare "Flop!"
The Tom Cruise WWII thriller earned \$21.5 million over the

weekend, with a four-day haul of \$30 million since it opened on Christmas Day.
That was a solid and better than expected box-office draw for "Valkyrie," which cost a reported \$90 million to produce (director Bryan Singer has pegged it at closer to \$75 million) and perhaps

more than half that to market it.
"This totally robs the nay-sayers of their ability to deem it a flop, because it's not," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Media By Numbers. "It does show the renewed star power of Tom Cruise."

Dergarabedian credited Cruise's comic (and Golden Globe nominated) performance in the summer's "Tropic Thunder" in helping audiences again embrace the actor. He also noted that a film about Nazis wouldn't have earned nearly as much without Cruise's star power and a savvy marketing campaign. That campaign — which positioned "Valkyrie" as a historical thriller and led to an audience that MGM said skewed 55 percent male — helped turn back earlier bad publicity.

When photos were first released showing Cruise as would-be Adolf Hitler assassin Col. Claus von Stauffenberg, the pictures of the actor in a German WWII uniform and eye patch were widely mocked online. A brief disagreement with the German Defense Ministry due to Cruise's Scientology beliefs also didn't help. And United Artists, a division of MGM, repeatedly shifted



Tom Cruise as Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg in 'Valkyrie'.
(United Artists/Handout/Reuters)

the release date before settling on a Christmas Day release but without an Oscar campaign. For his part, Cruise, who co-owns UA, kept his sense of humor about it.
"Go kill Hitler on Christmas!" joked Cruise in a recent interview with The Associated Press.
But the move paid off partially because of high across-the-board returns on the holiday. According to Sunday estimates, "Marley & Me" debuted at No. 1 with \$37 million in weekend ticket sales and a total of \$51.7 million since opening Christmas Day. The four-day take of Adam Sandler's "Bedtime Stories" totaled \$38.6 million and "Benjamin Button" grossed \$39 in the same period. The stakes may have been

highest, though, for "Valkyrie." It was only the second film released by UA since it was reformed by Cruise and producer Paula Wagner. Last year's "Lions for Lambs," in which Cruise starred with Meryl Streep, earned just \$15 million.
Cruise and Wagner (who has since left her chief executive post at UA) initially planned to release four films a year, so there is all the more pressure on "Valkyrie" — UA's one 2008 film — to perform well. Dergarabedian believes "Valkyrie" stands a good chance of becoming profitable in the end, partially because Cruise is still a big draw internationally. Even "Lions for Lambs" managed nearly \$50 million at the foreign box office. □

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Great jazz trumpeter Freddie Hubbard dies at 70



In this Jan. 13, 2006 file photo, Jazz musician Freddie Hubbard receives a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters Award at the NEA Jazz Masters Awards Concert in New York. Hubbard, the Grammy-winning jazz musician whose style influenced a generation of trumpet players and who collaborated with such greats as Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, died Monday, Dec. 29, 2008, at Sherman Oaks Hospital in Los Angeles according to Hubbard's manager, David Weiss. He had been hospitalized since suffering a heart attack last month. He was 70.

(AP Photo/Jennifer Szymaszek, file)

By JOHN ROGERS,
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Freddie Hubbard, the Grammy-winning jazz musician whose blazing virtuosity influenced a generation of trumpet players and who collaborated with such greats as Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, died Monday, a month after suffering a heart attack. He was 70.

Hubbard died at Sherman Oaks Hospital, said his manager, fellow trumpeter David Weiss of the New Jazz Composers Octet. He had been hospitalized since suffering the heart attack a day before Thanksgiving.

A towering figure in jazz circles, Hubbard played on hundreds of recordings in a career dating to 1958, the year he arrived in New York from his hometown Indianapolis, where he had studied at the Arthur Jordan Conservatory of Music and with the Indianapolis Symphony.

Soon he had hooked up with such jazz legends as Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley and Coltrane.

"I met Trane at a jam session at Count Basie's in Harlem in 1958," he told the jazz magazine Down Beat in 1995. "He said, 'Why don't you come over and let's try and practice a little bit together.' I almost went crazy. I mean, here is a 20-year-old kid practicing with John Coltrane. He helped me out a lot, and we worked several jobs together."

In his earliest recordings, which included "Open Sesame" and "Goin' Up" for Blue Note in 1960, the influence of Davis, Chet Baker and others on Hubbard is obvious, Weiss said. But within a couple years he would develop a style all his own, one that would influence generations of musicians, including Wynton Marsalis.

"He influenced all the trumpet players that came after him," Marsalis told The Associated Press earlier this year. "Certainly I listened to him a lot. ... We all listened to him. He has a big sound and a great sense of rhythm and time and really the hallmark of his playing is an exuberance. His playing is exuberant."

Hubbard played on more than 300 recordings, including some of the most important jazz albums of the 1960s, including Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage," Coleman's "Free Jazz," Eric Dolphy's "Out to Lunch," Coltrane's "Ascension," Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil" and his own classic, "Ready for Freddie." However, he enjoyed his biggest success in the 1970s with such albums for Creed Taylor's fusion-oriented CTI label as "Red Clay" and "First Light."

The latter won him a Grammy in 1972 for best jazz performance by a group.

"Freddie made popular fusion records for CTI that reached a mass audience but were still artistic and unmatched," fellow trumpeter Chris Botti said Monday.

But Hubbard did not abandon straight-ahead acoustic jazz, also performing and recording in the 1970s with the group V.S.O.P., which included the members of Miles Davis' legendary 1960s quintet — Hancock, Shorter, Ron Carter and Tony Williams.

"I've played some things that I don't think too many cats can play that are alive today," Hubbard told the AP in June

when he was in New York to perform at the Iridium jazz club to celebrate the release of his last album, "On the Real Side."

"Whatever they play, it's not going to surpass that," he said of his body of work. "You see, I played like a tenor saxophone, so a lot of the things with me are kind of different, kind of hard to play."

As a young musician, Hubbard became revered among his peers for a fiery, blazing style that allowed him to hit notes higher and faster than just about anyone else with a horn. As age and infirmity began to slow that style, he switched to a softer, melodic style and played a flugelhorn.

"I think that Freddie Hubbard probably is the greatest trumpet player ever — his sound and his phrasing and his approach to the instrument. His prowess

on the instrument left him in a league of his own, like a Michael Jordan or Tiger Woods in sports," Botti said.

Frederick Dewayne Hubbard was born in Indianapolis on April 7, 1938. He grew up playing mellophone, trumpet and French horn.

After his early recordings for Blue Note, he joined Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in the early 1960s, later playing in groups with Quincy Jones, George Duke and numerous others. His recordings would span such styles as bebop, fusion, free jazz and jazz-rock. His career slowed in the 1980s, and he attributed that in part to a period of heavy drinking and partying with "the rock crowd."

In the 1990s, relentless touring, coupled with his hard style of playing, nearly ended his career

when his lip became infected. He had to lay off for a period of time and eventually switch to a softer style.

"I played a very loose, elastic style of playing.

I used a lot of slurs, different moves. I advise any young trumpeter not to do what I did, because that style could be hazardous to your health," he said last June.

He came back in the last decade, however, releasing "New Colors" in 2001 and "On The Real Side" in 2008, both with the New Jazz Composers Octet playing updated arrangements of some of his compositions, such as "Theme for Kareem."

In 2006, Hubbard was named a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master, the nation's highest jazz honor.

A memorial tribute is planned for next month in New York. □

New Year's Dash

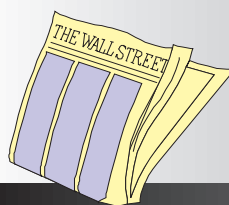
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News Analysis

Dave Barry Year in Review: Bailing out of 2008

BY DAVE BARRY

How weird a year was it?
Here's how weird:

- O.J. actually got convicted of something.
- Gasoline hit \$4 a gallon -- and those were the good times.
- On several occasions, Saturday Night Live was funny.
- There were a few days there in October when you could not completely rule out the possibility that the next Treasury Secretary would be Joe the Plumber.
- Finally, and most weirdly, for the first time in history, the voters elected a president who -- despite the skeptics who said such a thing would never happen in the United States -- was neither a Bush NOR a Clinton.

Of course not all the events of 2008 were weird. Some were depressing. The only U.S. industries that had a good year were campaign consultants and foreclosure lawyers. Everybody else got financially whacked. Millions of people started out the year with enough money in their 401(k)'s to think about retiring on, and ended up with maybe enough for a medium Slurpee.

So we can be grateful that 2008 is almost over. But before we leave it behind, let's take a few minutes to look back and see if we can find some small nuggets of amusement. Why not? We paid for it, starting with . . .

JANUARY

. . . which begins, as it does every four years, with presidential contenders swarming into Iowa and expressing sincerely feigned interest in corn. The Iowa caucuses produce two surprises:

- On the Republican side, the winner is Mike Huckabee, folksy former governor of Arkansas or possibly Oklahoma, who vows to remain in the race until he gets a commentator gig with Fox. His win deals a severe blow to Mitt Romney and his bid to become the first president of the android persuasion. Not competing in Iowa are Rudy Giuliani, whose strategy is to stay out of the race until he is

mathematically eliminated, and John McCain, who entered the caucus date incorrectly into his 1996 Palm Pilot.

- On the Democratic side, the surprise winner is Barack Obama, who is running for president on a long and impressive record of running for president. A mesmerizing speaker, Obama electrifies voters with his exciting new ideas for change, although people have trouble remembering exactly what these ideas were because they were so darned mesmerized. Some people become so excited that they actually pass out. These are members of the press corps. Obama's victory comes at the expense of former front-runner Hillary Clinton, who fails to ignite voter passion despite a rip-snorter of a stump speech in which she recites, without notes, all 17 points of her plan to streamline tuition-loan applications.

The instant the caucuses are over the contenders drop Iowa like a rancid frankfurter and jet to other states to express concern about whatever people there care about.

Meanwhile George W. Bush, who is still technically the president, visits the Middle East and finds things over there just as confusing as ever.

In sports, LSU wins the national college football championship, easily defeating the Miami Dolphins.

Finally, in what some economists see as a troubling sign, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac invest \$12.7 billion in Powerball tickets.

The worsening economy takes center stage in . . .

FEBRUARY

. . . when, amid much fanfare, Congress passes, and President Bush signs, an "economic stimulus package" under which the federal government will give taxpayers back several hundred dollars apiece of their own money, the idea being that they will use this money to revive the U.S. economy by buying TV sets that were made in China. This will seem much more comical in the fall.

The battle between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton heats up as the two engage in a series of increasingly hostile debates, including one in which Secret Service agents have to tackle a large, angry, red-faced man who bursts from the audience shouting incoherently. This turns out to be Bill Clinton, who is swiftly dispatched by his wife's campaign to work his magic on voters in the crucial Guam caucuses.

On the Republican side, John McCain emerges as the front-runner when Mitt Romney drops out of the race, citing "motherboard issues."

Abroad, Fidel Castro steps down after 49 years as president of Cuba, explaining that he wants to spend more time decomposing. In selecting his successor, the Cuban National Assembly, after conducting an exhaustive nationwide search, selects Fidel's brother, Raúl, who narrowly edges out Dennis Kucinich.

In sports, the undefeated New England Patriots lose the Super Bowl to the New York Giants in a stunning upset that confounds the experts, not to mention Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which had \$38 billion on the Pats to win.

Speaking of losers, in . . .

MARCH

. . . New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer becomes embroiled in an embarrassing scandal when a criminal investigation reveals that he looks like a large suit-wearing rodent. Also he has been seeing a high-class prostitute known as "Kristen" in a Washington, D.C., hotel. Spitzer resigns in disgrace; "Kristen," hounded by the press and no longer able to pursue her profession, receives a \$23 billion bailout from the federal government.

In politics, Barack Obama addresses the issue of why, in his 20 years of membership in Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, he failed to notice that the pastor, Jeremiah Wright, is a racist lunatic. In a major televised address widely hailed for its brilliance, Obama

explains that . . . OK, nobody really remembers what the actual explanation was. But everybody agrees it was mesmerizing. Obama's opponent, Hillary Clinton, gets into a controversy of her own when she claims that, as first lady, she landed in Bosnia "under sniper fire." News outlets quickly locate archive video showing that she was in fact greeted with a welcoming ceremony featuring an 8-year-old girl reading a poem. Clinton's campaign releases a statement pointing out that it was "a pretty long poem."

On the Republican side, John McCain wraps up the nomination and embarks on a series of strategic naps.

On Wall Street, J.P. Morgan buys Bear Stearns; nobody really understands what this means, but it is clearly bad. Abroad, the dollar declines to the point where currency traders are using it solely for wiping up spills. Both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac apply to be contestants on Deal Or No Deal.

In environmental news, Earth Hour is observed on March 29, when cities around the world display their commitment to conserving energy by turning out their lights for one hour. When the lights come back on, Detroit is missing.

In sports, the troubled Olympic torch becomes embroiled in a protest riot in Athens; witnesses claim the torch "reeked of alcohol."

In football, beloved Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre retires and embarks on a series of emotional farewell events, several of which are still going on when he signs to play for the Jets.

Speaking of emotional, in . . .

APRIL

. . . tensions run high in the Pennsylvania Democratic primary, which all the experts agree is extremely crucial. Barack Obama gets into trouble with rural voters for saying that rural Americans are "bitter" and "cling to guns or religion." Responding to charges that this statement is elitist, Obama



responds: "You are getting sleepy. Very sleepy."

Seeking to capitalize on Obama's gaffe, Hillary Clinton starts channeling Annie Oakley, tossing down shots of whiskey and talking about her love of guns and hunting. After one particularly long day on the trail, she grabs a Secret Service agent's pistol and attempts to shoot a deer; instead she wounds a reporter, thereby sealing her victory in the Pennsylvania primary, which turns out to not actually be all that crucial because the Democratic race keeps right on going with no sign of ending in the current decade.

On the Republican side, John McCain gets wind of something called the "Internet" and orders his staff to give him a summary of it on index cards.

In economic news, the price of gasoline tops \$4 a gallon, meaning the cost of filling up an average car is now \$50, or, for Hummer owners, \$17,500. Congress, responding to the financial pain of the American people, goes into partisan gridlock faster than ever before, with Republicans demanding that the oil companies immediately start drilling everywhere, including cemeteries, and Democrats calling for a massive effort to develop alternative energy sources such as wind, the sun, tides, comets, Al Gore and dragon breath, using technology expected to be perfected sometime this millennium. It soon becomes clear that Congress will not actually do anything, so Americans start buying less gasoline.

The economic news is also gloomy for the U.S. automotive industry, where General Motors, in a legally questionable move aimed at boosting its sagging car sales, comes out with a new model called "The Chevrolet Toyota."

In sports, the troubled Olympic torch punches a photographer while entering a San Francisco hotel at 3 a.m. with Lindsay Lohan.

Speaking of trouble, in . . .

MAY

. . . the International Atomic Energy Agency releases a report stating that Iran is actively developing nuclear warheads. In response, Iran issues a statement asserting that (1) it absolutely is not developing nuclear warheads, and (2) these are peaceful warheads. The United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia and China convene an emergency meeting, during which they manage, in heated negotiations, to talk France out of surrendering.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac invest \$17 billion in an Herbalife franchise.

In presidential politics, the increasingly bitter fight for the Democratic nomination intensifies when Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton hold a televised debate, moderated by PBS anchor Jim Lehrer, that consists entirely of spitting.

On the Republican side, John McCain, preparing for the fall campaign, purchases a new necktie.

The big spring Hollywood hit is the film version of Sex and the City, which draws millions of movie-goers, including an estimated three men, two of whom thought they were in the theater for the fourth Indiana Jones movie, Indiana Jones Experiences Frequent Nighttime Urination. The riveting plot of Sex and the City, which runs for nearly two-and-a-half hours, involves the efforts of Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte to plan Carrie's wedding -- Finally! - - to "Mr. Big," only to have things go awry when mutant vampire moles bore up through the church floor and suck the blood out of the wedding party through their feet.

In sports, both the Kentucky Derby and the Indianapolis 500 are won by Usain Bolt.

Speaking of victory, in . . .

JUNE

. . . Barack Obama finally claims the bitterly contested Democratic nomination when Hillary Clinton, behind on delegates and in debt to the tune of \$25 million, including \$9 million for hairspray alone, suspends her campaign and declares that she has "no hard feelings" and will do "whatever it takes" to help Obama get elected "even though he is scum." Bill Clinton, at his wife's side, nods vigorously, but is unable to speak because

of the restraining device. A gracious John McCain tells the press that he "looks forward to a spirited debate with Sen. Mondale." Before he can take questions he is informed by his aides that he has an important meeting.

In other campaign-related news, Chicago developer Tony Rezko, a former Obama associate and fundraiser, is convicted on corruption charges, but the press realizes that this is not an issue after Obama explains that it is not an issue.

President George W. Bush takes one last official trip to Europe to meet with European leaders. Unfortunately they are not home.

In economic news, Chrysler announces a plan to lay off workers who have not been born yet. The lone economic bright spot is the iPhone, which is selling like crazy thanks to the release of a new model enhanced with the capability of sucking pieces of your brain out through your ear until all you want to do is play with your iPhone.

Speaking of vegetables, the big scare in June comes from the Food and Drug Administration, which announces that tomatoes are killing people. A wave of fear grips the nation as supermarket shoppers stampede from the produce section, causing several fatal shopping-cart mishaps. At the height of the panic, with the tomato industry reeling, the FDA declares that, oops, the killer might NOT be tomatoes, but some other vegetable, possibly jalapeño peppers, but nobody knows for sure. Eventually everyone calms down, but not before a bank in Cleveland is held up by a man wielding only a stalk of asparagus.

The scientific community is elated by NASA's announcement that the Phoenix lander has detected ice on Mars. The elation turns to concern when, several hours later, the lander detects a Zamboni machine.

Tiger Woods, in an epic performance, wins the U.S. Open playing on an injured and very painful knee, thereby proving, beyond all doubt, that golf is not a real sport.

Speaking of epic performances, in . . .

JULY

. . . Barack Obama, having secured North and South America, flies to Germany without using an airplane

and gives a major speech -- speaking English and German simultaneously -- to 200,000 mesmerized Germans, who immediately elect him chancellor, prompting France to surrender.

Meanwhile John McCain, at a strategy session at a golf resort, tells his top aides to prepare a list of potential running mates, stressing that he wants somebody "who is completely, brutally honest." Unfortunately, because of noise from a lawn mower, the aides think McCain said he wants somebody "who

has competed in a beauty contest." This will lead to trouble down the road.

Speaking of trouble, the economic news continues to worsen with the discovery that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have sent \$87 billion to a Nigerian businessman with a compelling e-mail story.

Also troubling is the news from Iran, which test-fires some long-range missiles, although Iranian President Wackjob Lunatic insists that Iran intends to use these missiles "for stump removal."

In sports, the government of China, in an effort to improve air quality for the Beijing Olympics, bans flatulence.

Speaking of Olympian, in . . .

AUGUST

. . . Barack Obama, continuing to shake up the establishment, selects as his running mate Joe Biden, a tireless fighter for change since he was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1849. The Democratic Party gathers in Denver to formally nominate Obama, who descends from his Fortress of Solitude



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to mesmerize the adoring crowd with an acceptance speech objectively described by The New York Times as "comparable to the Gettysburg Address, only way better." Meanwhile John McCain, still searching for the perfect running mate, tells his top aides in a conference call that he wants "someone who is capable of filling my shoes." Unfortunately, he is speaking into the wrong end of his cellular phone, and his aides think he said "someone who is capable of killing a moose." Shortly thereafter McCain stuns the world, and possibly himself, by selecting Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, a no-nonsense hockey mom with roughly 114 children named after random nouns such as "Hamper."

In yet another troubling economic indicator, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac rob a liquor store. Internationally, the big story is the Olympic games, which begin under a cloud of controversy when journalists in Beijing, who were promised unfettered Internet access by the Chinese government, discover that no matter what address they enter into their browsers, they wind up on Chairman Mao's Facebook page (he has 1.3 billion friends). But even the critics are blown away by the spectacular opening ceremony, which features the entire population of Asia performing the Electric Slide. The games themselves are dominated by swimmer Michael Phelps, who wins eight gold

medals, thus putting himself on a sounder financial footing than the U.S. Treasury. China wins the gold-medal count, although critics charge that some of China's 11-year-old female gymnasts are under the minimum age of 16. Chinese officials refute this charge by noting, correctly, that they have tanks. Elsewhere abroad, war breaks out between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, serving as a stark reminder that, in an increasingly uncertain world, we, as Americans, have no idea where these places are. Speaking of uncertainty, in . . .

SEPTEMBER
 . . . the Republican convention gets off to a tentative start in

St. Paul when President Bush and Vice President Cheney are unable to attend, partly because of Hurricane Gustav, and partly because the organizers told them that the convention was in Atlanta. The mood improves when Sarah Palin dazzles the delegates with her winning smile, detailed knowledge of what is on the teleprompter, and spot-on imitation of Tina Fey. The next night, John McCain, formally accepting the nomination, pledges to run "a totally incoherent campaign." None of this is reported in the media because the entire press corps is in Wasilla, Alaska, investigating rumors that Palin once dated a yeti. But the presidential campaign is soon overshadowed by the troubled economy. The federal government is finally forced to take over Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac after they are caught selling crack at a middle school. But that is not enough, as major financial institutions, having lost hundreds of billions of dollars thanks to years of engaging in practices ranging from questionable to moronic, begin failing, which gives the federal government an idea: Why not give these institutions MORE hundreds of billions of dollars, generously provided by taxpayers? This plan is discussed and debated in urgent meetings in Washington attended by the president, the cabinet, congressional leaders, Sen. Obama, Sen. McCain and all other concerned parties except the actual taxpayers, who are not invited because they are, with all due respect, way too stupid to understand high finance. The taxpayers are repeatedly assured, however, that unless they fork over \$700 billion, the economy will go right down the toilet. And so it comes to pass that in . . .

anywhere on earth gets a free developing nation. But it is not enough; the financial system is in utter chaos. At one point a teenage girl in Worcester, Mass., attempts to withdraw \$25 from an ATM and winds up acquiring Wells Fargo. As the crisis worsens, an angry Congress, determined to get some answers, holds hearings and determines that whoever is responsible for this mess, it is definitely not Congress. Meanwhile all the cable-TV financial experts agree that since they totally failed to predict this disaster, they will stop pretending they have a clue what the markets are going to do and henceforth confine themselves to topics they can discuss knowledgeably, such as what time it is. Just kidding! They'd get that wrong, too. The economy dominates the presidential campaign, with the focal point being "Joe the Plumber," an Ohio resident who asks Barack Obama a mildly confrontational question about tax policy and within hours is more famous than the Dalai Lama. He draws intense scrutiny from the news media, which, using investigative reporters borrowed from the Palin-yeti beat, determine that "Joe the Plumber" is in fact (1) not named Joe, (2) not a plumber, (3) a citizen of Belgium, and (4) biologically, a woman. In the presidential debates, John McCain, looking and sounding increasingly like the late Walter Brennan, cites Joe the Plumber a record 847 times while charging that Obama's tax policies amount to socialism. Obama, ahead of McCain by double digits in the polls and several hundred million dollars in money, skips the debates so he can work on his inaugural address. The New York Times declares his performance "masterful."

In non-economic news, a Las Vegas jury convicts O.J. Simpson on 12 counts of being an unbelievable idiot. He faces more than 60 years in jail, which could end his relentless quest to find the killer of the people he stabbed to death in 1994. In sports, the entire nation rejoices as the World Series is won, yet again, by a team other than the New York Yankees. Speaking of winning, in . . .

NOVEMBER
 . . . Barack Obama, in a historic triumph, becomes the nation's

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first black president since the second season of 24, setting off an ecstatically joyful and boisterous all-night celebration that at times threatens to spill out of The New York Times newsroom. Obama, following through on his promise to bring change to Washington, quickly begins assembling an administration consisting of a diverse group of renegade outsiders, ranging all the way from lawyers who attended Ivy League schools and then worked in the Clinton administration to lawyers who attended entirely different Ivy league schools and then worked in the Clinton administration.

But the hopeful mood is dampened by grim economic news. The stock market plummets farther as investors realize that the only thing that had been keeping the economy afloat was the millions of dollars spent daily on TV commercials for presidential candidates explaining how they would fix the economy. As it becomes increasingly clear that the federal government's plan of giving hundreds of billions of dollars to dysfunctional companies has not fixed the problem, the government comes up with a bold new plan: give more hundreds of billions of dollars to dysfunctional companies. Soon the government is in a bailout frenzy, handing out money left and right, at one point accidentally giving \$14 billion to a man delivering a Domino's pizza to the Treasury

building.

More and more companies seek federal help, among them the troubled "big three" auto makers, whose chief executives fly to Washington in three separate corporate jets to ask Congress for \$25 billion, explaining that if they don't get the money, they will be unable to continue making cars that Americans are not buying.

In space, NASA's woes continue when an astronaut attempting to repair the troubled multibillion-dollar international space station accidentally lets go of a special \$100,000 space tool bag, which drifts away, taking with it the special \$17,000 space washer needed to fix the station's special, but troubled, space toilet. NASA announces that it will now have to send up a special space plumber, who charges \$38 million an hour.

In sports, New York Giants wide receiver Plaxico Burress shoots himself in the thigh in a New York City nightclub, using a gun he carried to protect himself from bad things that might happen to him, such as getting shot.

Speaking of bad things, in . . .

DECEMBER

. . . the National Bureau of Declaring Things That Make You Go "Duh" declares that the nation has been in a recession since December of 2007. The bureau also points out that, according to its statistical analysis, "for some time now, bears apparently have been



going to the bathroom in the woods."

The CEOs of the Increasingly Small Three auto makers return to Washington to resume pleading for a bailout, this time telling Congress that if they can reach an agreement that day, they will throw in the undercoating, the satellite-radio package AND a set of floor mats. "We're actually LOSING MONEY on this deal!" they assure Congress. Finally they reach a \$13.4 billion agreement under which the car companies will continue to provide jobs, medical insurance and pension benefits, but will cease producing actual cars. The agreement will be overseen by the federal government, using its legendary ability to keep things on budget.

President-elect Obama, continuing to bring change in the form of fresh-faced Washington outsiders, announces that his secretary of state will be Hillary Clinton.

The position of secretary of defense, currently held by Bush appointee Robert Gates, will be filled by Bush appointee Robert Gates. Responding to rumors that he also plans to retain Dick Cheney, Obama insists that he has tried to ask the vice president to leave, "but nobody knows where he is."

In other political news, federal authorities arrest Democratic Illinois Gov. Rod "Rod" Blagojevich after wiretaps reveal that he was . . . OK, that he was being the governor of Illinois. Everybody is very, very shocked. Meanwhile the recount in the extremely tight Minnesota Senate race between Norm Coleman and Al Franken is thrown into disarray with the discovery that more than 13,000 of the ballots were cast by residents of Palm Beach County, Fla.

But the economy remains the dominant issue, with retailers reporting weak holiday sales as many shoppers pass up pricier

gifts such as jewelry and big-screen TVs in favor of toilet paper and jerky. As the year draws to a close, the president's Council of Economic Advisers warns that the current recession "could spiral downward into a full-blown depression," leaving the U.S. with "no viable economic option but to declare war on Japan."

In another troubling note, U.S. intelligence sources report that Iran is developing "a gigantic rocket-powered shoe."

Adding to the year-end gloom is a congressionally appointed bipartisan commission on terrorism, which releases a troubling report asserting that there is an 80 percent chance that within the next two years, a major U.S. city will be struck, with devastating consequences, by "an 18,000 mile-per-hour tool bag from space."

The point is, if you have any money left, you should spend it soon.

And happy New Year.



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